

FIGHTBACK IN HOUSING

Nick Durie reports on the tenants' struggle

The last four years in Scotland has been one of retreat and stalemate in Scotland's community struggles. After massive victories at the turn of the century – the 2001 Housing Act, won by a long campaign involving the (then) powerful national federation of tenants and residents' associations, the Scottish Tenants Organisation, guaranteed the right of Scottish residents to a social house – the government set about crushing the tenants movement. In 2004 the clampdown began. The state set about systematically attacking the tenants movement. At the lowest ebb, the department for the crushing of independent tenants organisation and the total privatisation of council housing ('Communities Scotland') was organising 'unity' conferences across the country, announcing that 'the STO was no more'. A wave of stock transfer ballots was set in motion.

Everything seemed to be lost. The New Labour Scottish Executive was tooling up central government, through Community Planning Partnership agreements, to force councils to privatise municipal services faster. Central government noting that neo-liberal rhetoric did not match up to reality unleashed 'People and Place', announcing that "Scotland [was] open for Business." Glasgow (with the largest concentration of social housing in Europe), had already moved into phase one of the plan – council housing being turned over to stock transfer landlord the GHA. Edinburgh remained, and, it was hoped, the rest would follow.

Until a grassroots political earthquake took place.

At the end of the year in 2006, Edinburgh tenants voted no to stock transfer. Despite the failure of the local tenants federation to fully back the campaign, maverick tenants campaigners, running a low key, grassroots campaign, which was based around solid groundwork, talking to tenants, explaining the issues, and working steadily to reverse and undermine the multi-million pound state propaganda machine, was able to strike a hammer blow to the process of stock transfer.

The response of the ruling political class in Scotland was as immediate as it was shocked and confused. A conference was called, where the unthinkable was to be countenanced.

LENS CAP GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROP CONCERN



GM maize is destroyed in Brandenburg, Germany. Anti-GM activists have expressed concern that a hitherto unknown 'contamination' seems to be destroying GM crops across Germany. The highly selective nocturnal pests destroy only GM crops, and can devastate several hectares in just a few hours.

Wholesale stocktransfer was on the rocks. Was there another solution? What about ALMOs? How could they privatise social housing when tenants could turn around and vote 'NO!' even after the tenants movement had been crushed?

As the crisis talks began, cracks started to emerge in the Scottish Executive. It seemed possible, after the failure of the GHA to move to second stage transfer, and the increasing dissatisfaction of working people towards the New Labour project that heads might roll at the top. In the intervening malaise of months that came to follow the Edinburgh vote a quiet process of rebuilding began. New community movements were forged in places as far afield as Glasgow, and Inverness, and more votes began to be won.

Then a series of unexpected events took place. For the first time in history, the SNP became the Government. This was accompanied by the housing crash and credit crunch. The

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

Raided squats block cops

Following the illegal eviction and subsequent arrest of two squatters from a property in Dalston, Hackney, on the morning of Friday 18th July, a thirty-strong demonstration of local anarchists blockaded Stoke Newington Police Station for over an hour from 6pm.

The rally was organised by word of mouth and text message only, and successfully secured the release of one of the prisoners without charge during the demonstration.

The lawyer for both of the prisoners told the crowd that the remaining squatter faced extradition to Poland on an unrelated charge, but the original offence of abstracting electricity had been dropped.

Passers-by were overwhelmingly supportive, and it seems the show of strength by the anarchists, some of whom were masked, actually prevented police heavy-handedness rather than provoked it.

Tent City back

The struggle to prevent a corporation building a City Academy on Wembley Park Sports Ground in West London has moved into a new phase. The proposal for 'Wembley Ark Academy' comes from a group of millionaire merchant bankers and currency speculators, led by Swiss multi-millionaire Arpad Busson. The Ark Academy is estimated to cost around £30 million of public money yet it would be privately run.

The re-establishment of the Tent City (pictured below) began on the 30th June, following last year's six-month tree-house occupation. On Tuesday 15th July Brent Council representatives sought a court order for the immediate eviction of the site, but by the afternoon around 50 local people had turned up to show support, and the eviction didn't take place. From Wednesday local teachers and supporters took permanent positions, with NUT rep Hank Roberts chained to the roof of a building, but the site was evicted by force at 6.30am on the 18th July.

Speaking to *Freedom*, a new group has told us that at 5am on Sunday 27th July they re-occupied the site, establishing a perimeter and two tent camps. They came from all over London and are opposed specifically to the sell-off of public land, but are building links with the previous campaign. On Monday they resisted the first attempt to start construction work and intend to stay on site for as long as possible.



LENS CAP LONDON BUS DRIVERS MARCH



London bus drivers march to city hall demanding pay parity among the private companies who run London's buses. Unite is calling for a single rate of pay for drivers of £30,000 a year, based on a 38-hour week. Currently the eighteen London bus companies all operate with different pay structures, with substantial pay inequalities.

Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival

The festival of the Trades Union Congress took place between Friday 18th and Sunday 20th July in the small Dorset town of Tolpuddle. The Tolpuddle Martyrs (pictured below), whose story of working class solidarity remains a key moment in the evolution of the trades' union movement, is used as a backdrop for a weekend of celebration for the congress.

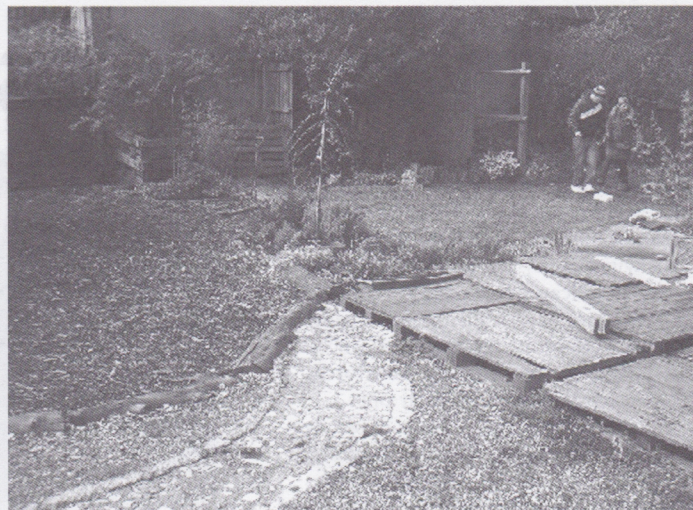
The festival itself was a well organised and hospitable family affair, with goers coming from all walks of life aside from just union activists. The music was consistently poor but the comedy proved a great deal better. Elvis Mcgonagall delivered a frequently funny poetical display and Mark Steel turned in a solid performance to headline the Saturday evening. Discussion ranged from insightful debates on the future of food production and consumption to the standard union rhetoric. Easily the most popular event of the festival however was the procession from the festival site to the tree where the Martyrs made their oath.

What is most striking about the weekend is the disparity between the history that the TUC celebrates and the attitude of the movement in its present form. That the festival itself was free (bar a small camping cost) highlights the level of resources that the congress is keen to misplace into fetishising past workers struggles. The aged outlook of speakers demonstrated clearly the gap that exists between the attitude of unions who have accepted a role in supporting neo-liberalism and the reality of a working class taking defeats left, right and centre.

What would the Martyrs be made of the festival? The Tolpuddle Martyrs are an inspiration for all of us, demonstrating the ability of our class to win and take the sacrifice in liberty that comes with seeking the necessary gains for our future. For all the top down espousal of IWW activist Joe Hill's famous line "Don't mourn; organise", the TUC is very keen to grieve.



Drawing by Clifford Harper



Land victory in Reading

After a year and a half anarchists of Reading Grassroots Action have claimed victory against the city council in their struggle to win community managed land. Taking inspiration from New York, where working-class, mostly immigrant, communities had illegally transformed hundreds of derelict lots into community gardens, Common Ground was originally created by squatters and local residents in January 2007 on land owned by Reading Borough Council. RBC had left the land and surrounding buildings a needle-covered derelict junkyard for more than five years beforehand. Despite legal threats, including an injunction barring the opening and an eviction notice being served, the garden was opened in May 2007, receiving huge support throughout the community and beyond, as well as favourable media reports including television news clips. Over the summer the garden was used every day and several well-attended community events were held including barbecues, live music, skills workshops and

a talk by a visiting 'land-rights' campaigner from Mexico. Two eviction days were seen off by local protest and refusal to cooperate, before the garden and nearby squat was finally evicted by physical force on 18th October.

Until last week RBC was negotiating the privatisation of the land which is currently publicly owned, favouring a bid from Unite Group; they hoped to construct a 300-plus capacity development on the site, renting rooms to students at overall prices potentially thousands above the average cost of university owned accommodation. This is despite two student halls buildings having lain empty for two years less than 200 yards away – a situation RGA also brought to public attention through direct action by attempting to squat them with local homeless activists in October 2007. Throughout the struggle RGA have highlighted that there was no public consultation, the only one being offered would be after the sale had gone through. After months of secret work, the garden was reopened on 12th April 2008

to mark the international day of action for autonomous spaces and again, hundreds of people from the area and outside came to support them. Keeping the garden open since then, they had worked closely with the local Residents Association to push for temporary legalisation. Last week RGA were contacted by the council who told the bid had fallen through and that not only was the garden legally theirs for the time being but they had won possession of another council site – they are currently viewing the offered land. The local residents want to see another garden, and RGA hope to start food growing projects there in response to the closure of allotments in the city over the last two years. "This is a huge victory for us" said Jim Grant, an original resident of the house on the site. "We started the project to show what was possible through direct action and make people question land ownership. Not even two years later and we are forcing the council to move land into community control."

Fightback in housing

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problems capitalism had been storing up since the last big crisis have started to come out. While this inevitably means foreclosures and misery for many, in terms of community politics it can mean that campaigns against gentrification and for more public housing (once the lost causes of the dead and dying left) are becoming winnable struggles. As more victories are racked up the chances of seeing a class movement, whose participants know what it is like to win, and win consecutively and convincingly, has become more than just a dream. It is becoming a reality.

Today as we enter the new political epoch (where the Labour Party can be unthinkable beaten on home soil by the SNP), the STO is recovering from the blows struck by one of the most comprehensive ruling class assaults on tenants' organisation in history. Membership

is up, and across the country there is a national campaign calling for council housing, investment, debt writeoff, and local organisers are getting their act together. There is also a renewed acceptance that sectional composition of community organisation like the STO needs to change, that we need to build outside of the heartlands of council housing, and try to organise all citizens into powerful community movements.

That process is only beginning to take shape, but for once it looks like the working class may be going on the attack. In Glasgow today a host of gentrification projects have been shelved – partly due to adverse economic conditions, partly due to widening and deepening community resistance. The programme for developing a federation of residents associations, the programme for developing in effect

a 'section movement', is now on course. Isn't it time that across the whole of the UK the working class went on the attack?

What is happening in your local tenants associations? What is the position of the struggle? Anarchists can help build popular community organisation by bringing fresh ideas and thinking, by contributing footsoldiers to the second most important front in the class war, and by acting to consciously develop a leadership of ideas that is more likely to lead to ever spiralling popular victories. Isn't it time the movement seized the initiative, grew up and started acting like the kind of socialist alternative to capitalism that has been missing since the syndicalist revolt? We have a chance to go on the offensive. Let's not squander it.

<http://praxisglasgow.wordpress.com>

PUBLIC SECTOR

Health inequalities exposed

A new investigation into the NHS has found that while in general treatments have improved for the NHS, the gap between rich and poor in terms of both lifespan and time spent without any major disabilities has grown significantly over the last 30 years.

The figures have come despite a general improvement in the treatment of cancers, which tend to affect manual workforces more heavily than white collar ones.

The audit commission, in its paper *Are We Choosing Health*, noted that between 1972-76 and 2002-05, the gap in life expectancy between men from manual and non-manual groups increased from 2.1 to 3.3, peaking at 3.8 years in 2001.

There has been less change between women from manual and non-manual groups, with an increase between 1972-76 and 2002-05 from 2.5 years to 2.9 years.

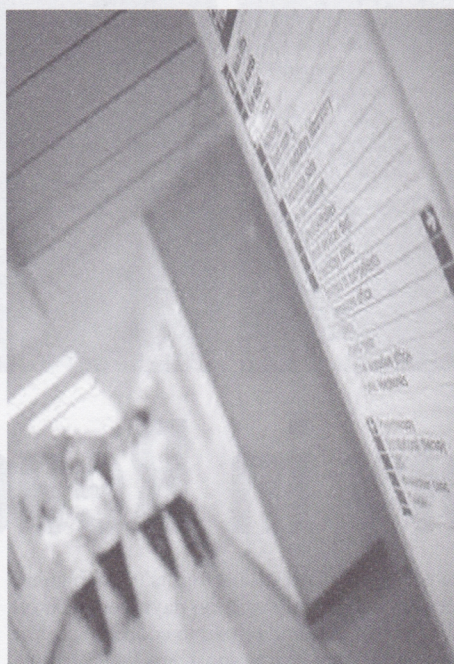
Differences become even more stark when comparing estimated life expectancy between the 25 most and least deprived wards. In the most deprived wards, life expectancy for men is around 65 years, compared with 85 years in the least deprived – a difference of 20 years. For women, the gap is 23 years, with life expectancy ranging from 72 to 95 years.

Men in the least deprived areas lived an average of seven years longer than those in the most deprived areas, and had 13 more years free of disability.

A similar, but less marked, pattern was evident for women.

Despite this, men in deprived areas are also working for longer than the affluent, as attacks on pensions continue.

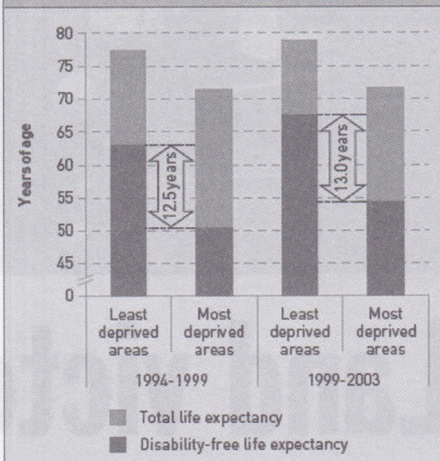
The team stated: "In both cases, those in non-manual groups live longer. It is well known that women – internationally – tend



to live longer than men. But, if trends continue, men from non-manual groups in this country could surpass women from manual groups in life expectancy within the next ten years."

In more specific terms, the report heavily criticised a lack of continuity in the NHS, with major structural changes doing more harm than good to the system. They said: "Related measures such as cross governmental policy and several reconfigurations of the NHS have not consistently contributed to – indeed have sometimes hindered – progress. A sustained focus on delivery, rather than the development of further national policy

Total life expectancy and disability-free life expectancy for men, 1994-1999 and 1999-2003



Note: Figures are for the 10% least deprived and the 10% most deprived wards

Source: Office for National Statistics and Department of Health

or changes in structure, would have been beneficial to support consolidation and coherent implementation."

While praising the NHS for delivering improved lifespans for the majority of society, strong criticism was delivered over late implementation of work on alcoholism and obesity, and alack of consistency throughout the service.

The criticisms levelled in the report have linked with concerns raised throughout the last few years over the impact of a raft of changes which have seen the government effectively privatise around 30% of the NHS since 1997.

Passports put on hold

The PCS has warned that the effects of its three-day passport worker strike at the end of last month could continue well into August as staff deal with backlogs.

The strike is to be followed by a work to rule, which it is hoped will stop the backlog from being cleared and disrupt activity strongly enough to push for a better settlement than the current 2.5% pay offer.

The three day stoppage – called by the union over office closures, draconian working practices and below inflation pay – led to the disruption of the issuing of passports and the cancellation of appointments and interviews. The union estimates that the strongly supported strike could result in a backlog of as many as 150,000 passport applications.

Staff are angry over restructuring plans which could see the UK's seven passport offices reduced to three. Plans have already been drawn up to close the Glasgow passport

office which could see over 100 jobs go. The union believes that resources are being diverted from passport processing to the controversial introduction of ID cards.

Staff have been further incensed by a pay offer which leads to the longest serving passport staff receiving no pay rise at all for the fifth year in a row.

The pay offer worth only 2.5%, comes at the same time as nearly £50 million has been spent on consultants. Starting salaries in the IPS are as low as £13,109.

The three day strike in the Identity and Passport Service brings to end 10 days of industrial unrest across the civil and public services.

This saw driving examiners, coastguards, Land Registry, Valuation Office Agency, Home Office and immigration staff take action over the government's policy of below inflation pay in the public sector.

Network rail strike

Around 12,000 rail maintenance workers for Network Rail have walked out as part of an 18-hour strike called by the RMT union.

The action on 26th July came after negotiations over a 'pay harmonisation' scheme which would see many Network rail staff take a pay cut ground to a halt.

The RMT claim that the action has substantially disrupted the repairs schedule for Network Rail, while the company has stated that no services were disrupted and that it had 'more than enough contingency staff'.

The union however raised significant questions over the company's handling of the situation, pointing out on the 25th that at least ten vans containing explosive gases, and quantities of petrol, oil and railway detonators could be left on public roads.

The RMT said 100% of its members walked out when a 30-hour strike over the same issue was called last month.

IN BRIEF

Public sector strike

Hundreds of thousands of Local Government workers took to the picket lines last week to participate in a two-day strike for better pay.

The strike, called by Unison, specifically demanded a greater pay rise from the government, who had offered a below inflation sum, in short, a pay cut.

"The government are once again showing that they do not care about public service" said a classroom assistant who joined the strike on the 16th and 17th July, "This pay rise is not only an insult to the hard work of all local government workers, but is a blatant provocation".

Athens supermarket sweep

In face of rising living costs and frozen pay offers Greek activists in Athens have begun to employ the traditional anarchist tactic of re-appropriation, better known as 'proletarian shopping'.

In the fourth action of its kind, several 'shoppers' walked out of the Marinopoulos supermarket on 1st July without paying for their full trolleys. The goods were then handed out at a nearby open air market, along with leaflets condemning the market and calling for more direct action.

"We choose to react by taking products of basic need from the shelves of large supermarkets and distributing them freely to those that they belong to. We do not regard our action as robbery, because these products are the fruits of our own exploited work and belong to all of us", commented one 'shopper'.

Like similar actions carried out last year in Germany, where high-end delicatessens equivalent to Selfridges were raided by activists dressed as superheroes, the public received the event well and nobody was arrested.

 56a Infoshop

Was opened in 1991 by a small group of local people in the back room of Fareshares Food Co-op in Walworth. Since that time we have maintained our radical presence locally through bookselling, publishing, actions and socialising.

★
We come from that old tradition that inspires people to do things for themselves without waiting or expecting those above us to do it for them. So here we are - independent, free thinking and open to ideas and collaboration.

★
It's not just our space, it's a place open to anyone who wants to change things for the better. Read this as your invitation to 56a Infoshop and beyond!! Another world is desirable!!

Crossroads for pirates

Six ISPs that have signed up to an agreement with the music industry to identify and disable file sharers (BT, Virgin Media, Orange, Tiscali, BSkyB and Carphone Warehouse).

This is a landmark for the music industry's war on piracy. The BPI, representing Britain's music companies, announced a 'three-step' sanction procedure, in which internet connections would be suspended on the second copyright infringement and cancelled at the third.

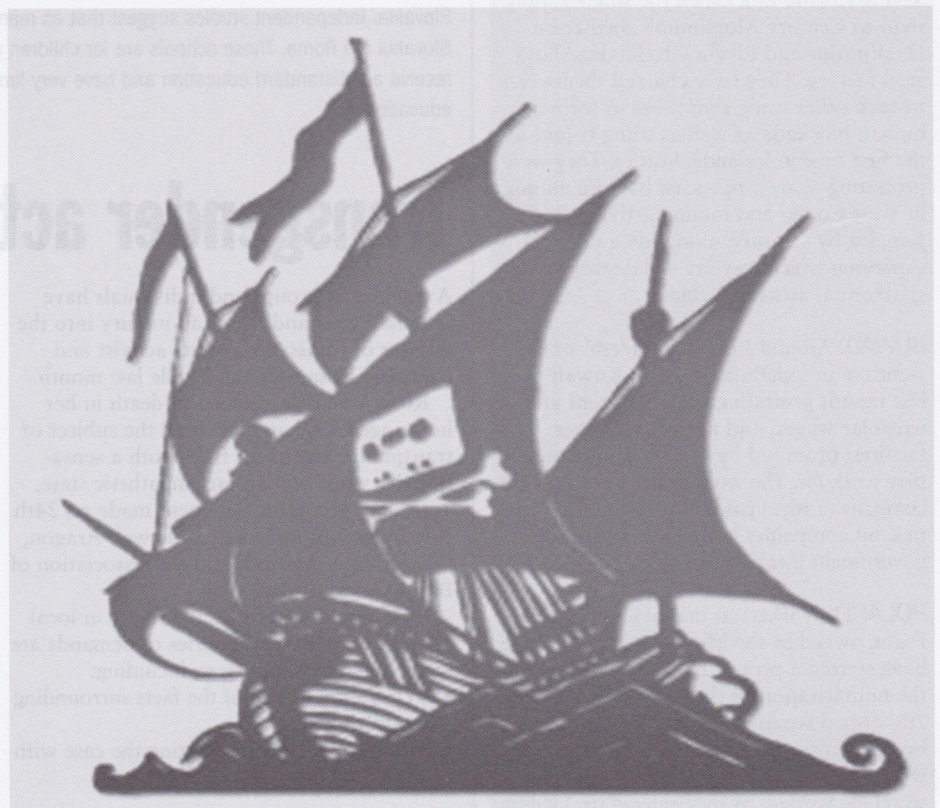
As soon as the news was announced however, obvious ways around the scheme were being discussed on the net, from basic 'taping' methods for recording music from net-radio stations and Youtube, to complex processes that would mask networks of

filesharers. Whether the most obvious solution – to move ISP – will affect the market remains to be seen.

The response of groundbreaking and largely anarchic groups like Holland's ThePirateBay is also crucial, as so far they have defeated all obstacles including the FBI.

As long as the sharing networks themselves exist, access to them can be found, and there is a whole culture involving millions of young people determined to keep their files free.

"That's all that your efforts result in, dear music industry," wrote Circle-timesquare on the timesonline.com. "Stronger, hardier weeds that you can never kill. You lose. You just don't know it yet."



French nukes poison hundreds

The French Nuclear giant EDF, which has been making underhand moves to win the contract to build the UK's next generation of power stations, (see *Freedom*, 24th May) has accidentally released 18,000 litres of Uranium solution containing natural uranium which contaminated more than a hundred workers.

Due to cleaning and repair work the containment system for a uranium solution holding tank was not functional when the tank filled. The inflow exceeded the tank's capacity and 30 cubic meters of Uranium

solution leaked – testing found elevated uranium levels in the nearby Gaffière and Lauzon rivers.

The liquid that escaped to the ground contained about 75kg of unenriched uranium, which is toxic as a heavy metal and slightly radioactive.

French authorities have banned the use of water from the Gaffière and Lauzon for drinking and watering of crops, swimming, and fishing, classifying the disaster as Level 1 on the International Nuclear Event Scale.

INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH: Unions are to regain a limited legal status in order to 'protect workers' rights', according to the ministry of home affairs in Bangladesh. The announcement was made at the launch of a handbook for wage and rights law in the country by the country's two main textile business associations.

COTE D'IVOIRE: A general strike has been called by the General Union of Ivoirian Workers in protest against a high and rising cost of living, as *Freedom* goes to press, demanding a reduction in fuel prices and a raise in the minimum wage. The strike is due to take place on 31st July.

A strike earlier in the month saw clashes between youths and police in the city of Abidjan, but its impact was reduced as there had been a seasonal lull.

ICELAND: On 21st July, 20 activists from Saving Iceland blockaded the single supply road to Century Aluminum's smelter on Hvalfjörður and Elkem – Icelandic Alloys steel factory. They have chained themselves to each other using arm tubes to form a human blockade as well as using tripod for the first time in Icelandic history. They were protesting against opencast bauxite mining in West Congo and mining activities in Jamaica by Century, alongside a planned expansion which they say will destroy unique geothermal areas in Iceland.

KUWAIT: Around 5,000 Bangladeshi workers went on an indefinite strike in Kuwait City last month protesting underpayment and irregular wages, and not getting other facilities promised by the Kuwaiti company they work for. The workers are placed by the company at royal palaces, hospitals, universities, oil companies and other important government establishments.

POLAND: Workers at manufacturing giant Fagor, owned by the Mondragon cooperative have started a protest in Warsaw following the militarisation of the factory there. Over 200 armed security guard were brought in by the company to deal with unionists who were protesting over a pay dispute there, searching workers as they entered the facility. In response hundreds joined protests outside against this treatment. The workers in Fagor-Mastercook have noted many instances of people being fired for belonging to unions. At least 20 members of August 80 have been fired, following a warning strike in June.

SOUTH AFRICA: Tens of thousands of workers have marched through central Johannesburg to protest rising food, fuel and electricity prices. The Congress of South African Trade Unions called the demonstration to put pressure on the government to act on rising prices through, for example, dropping interest rates. South Africa's central bank has increased interest rates by five percentage points since June 2006 in a bid to rein in spiralling inflation – currently at 10.9%.

LENS CAP SEGREGATION OF CHILDREN IN SLOVAKIA



Photograph: Amnesty International

Large numbers of Romani children are still being segregated within Slovakia's public school system according to a new Amnesty International report. *A tale of two schools: Segregating Roma into special education in Slovakia* documents the violations of the human right to education of Romani children in Slovakia. Independent studies suggest that as many as 80% of children placed in special schools in Slovakia are Roma. These schools are for children with mental disabilities. Romani children therefore receive a substandard education and have very limited opportunities for employment and further education.

Transgender activist murdered

A number of groups and individuals have criticised the handling of an inquiry into the murder of transsexual rights activist and anarchist Rosa Pazos in Seville last month.

Rosa, who was stabbed to death in her home aged 47, has since been the subject of transphobic treatment from both a sensationalist press and an unsympathetic state, according to a joint statement made on 24th July by groups including Stonewall Aragon, Liberation in Madrid, and the Association of Basque transgenders.

Rosa was a well-respected figure in local anarchist circles, and a series of demands are being made by supporters, including:

- A clear establishing of the facts surrounding her death;
- That the media begin treating the case with

the respect it deserves rather than focusing on Rosa's lifestyle;

- The reversal of current policy on transgender issues in Spain which does not allow anyone with mental health problems to decide on their own gender identity.

The statement also called for a number of demonstrations to be held around the country to put pressure for change onto the authorities.

While Rosa was not a member of the CNT she was a regular supporter of their initiatives. In a statement, the Seville branch said: "Rosa has been a fighter all her life, she has fought for her right to be recognised as the woman she was, for her right to a proper medical treatment, for her right to be socially and professionally accepted, for her freedom of speech."

Notes from the United States

It emerged at the end of June that local authority workers in at least eight states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Tennessee, Washington DC, and Wisconsin) are being instructed – and paid – to spy on citizens.

Police, firefighters, paramedics, railway security officials, workers for the utilities and even some corporate employees are among hundreds across the country now trained as 'Terrorism Liaison Officers' (TLOs) in a federally-supported project which expects them to be on the watch for and report "observed behaviour that may be indicative of intelligence-gathering or pre-operational

planning related to terrorism".

There is a list of suspicious behaviours. It includes taking photographs or videos of no apparent aesthetic value; making measurements, drawings, or taking notes; and conversing in code.

Colorado, for example, has 181 of these TLOs. There has been a 'Fusion Center' in the state since about 2005. It's a secure room in a state emergency compound to which such 'intelligence' can be relayed. There local law enforcement personnel submit reports via federal computer systems.

Local national and local civil liberties

Exposing offshore tax havens

Banking in offshore Panamanian and British accounts could see a crackdown as a libel case and government retrieval operation come into effect. In the first case, it could contribute to the end of a veil of secrecy which has been drawn over unsavoury aspects of banking in North and South America, as a Supreme Court decision has allowed for so-far immune foundation funds to be sequestered for legal process. These funds have historically been the final resting place of large amounts of drug money and corporate tax evasion in a state whose laws have made it the pre-eminent money laundering site in the Americas.

Panama was turned into one of the world's largest offshore financial centres after the military coup of 1968, following the intervention of US special envoy Nelson Rockefeller and the Chase Manhattan Bank. The dictatorship oversaw the implementation of tight financial secrecy laws and the removal of any others which would have been the norm for a US state. As a result, it has become a haven for both corporations and drug bosses to hide their cash, safe from scrutiny. Shell companies are permitted and have been used by a wide range of criminal groups around the world. Bearer shares are permitted for corporations and nominee directors and trustees as are allowed by law. However the secrecy of such companies has been challenged by a libel case brought as part of an internecine feud between HSBC Panama and Canadian ex-pat Peter Gordon. Gordon followed the route of setting up his own foundation in Panama using HSBC accounts. However, he became unhappy with their services and not only moved his money to another bank, but also criticised them online.

In response, HSBC Panama successfully sued the man for \$5 million in damages, and sequestered his funds – including his founda-



tion, which was thought to be secure.

The Supreme court case means that if a case can be built against a tax-evading company, it is now vulnerable to seizure of both its known and supposedly anonymous assets – opening up a stream of major companies to potential investigation and possible exposure.

In the UK meanwhile, the Inland Revenue is planning a crackdown on investors who have stored money in offshore accounts – by offering an amnesty in which only 10% of the funds admitted would face taxation.

The move repeats a similar effort last year, which saw companies such as Barclays,

HBOS, Lloyds TSB, HSBC and the Royal Bank of Scotland admit to some of their hidden accounts, netting the treasury £400 million in revenue.

The initiative has met with heavy criticism as it follows the demise of a scheme to close such loopholes altogether, after it met with hostility from the Confederation of business interests. It is thought that up to a third of all corporation tax is siphoned off using such schemes.

While more cases of tax evasion have been appearing every year, the number of prosecutions has halved since 1993.

Notes from the Unites States

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groups and advocates point to circumstances where, say, a power worker with no extensive specialised training (typically three to five working days) goes to someone's home on a call – a legitimate one. If, for example, there were no electricity in that home, or other innocent behaviour by the occupants which nevertheless drew attention to them, the TLO-worker might take the opportunity to spy on the family or individuals in question and put the resulting random, uncorroborated and empirical 'information' into a secret government database.

Mark Silverstein of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU, the equivalent of Liberty) comments "shortly after the current administration rolled out several initiatives to fight the 'War on Terror' ... one of those ... was called the Total Information Awareness Program. That program caused so much controversy that Congress eventually shut it

down. But it is reemerging in other forms.

The idea is to gather as much information as possible about as many people as possible and put this all together, allow it to be accessible to government officials who supposedly can analyse the patterns and determine which of those patterns are indicative of possible terrorist activity."

The same organisation at a recent press conference announced its findings to the effect that the Bush government's 'terrorist watch list' is now one million names long. Aside from the infringement of rights and the scope for abuse, there are concerns at its huge waste of money and resources as well as wild inaccuracies: at the same press conference Jim Robinson, former head of the Justice Department's criminal division, said that his name is on the list – although he has government security clearance.

Louis Further

Anti-war hammers are returned

A collection of hammers and other objects that were used to disable a US Navy plane in 2003 were turned over by Shannon gardai to one of the activists who carried out the action.

Veteran anti-war resister Ciaran O'Reilly held a press conference outside Shannon Airport on 24th July following the return of equipment used by the Pitstop Ploughshares group at the airport in February 2003. He brought the hammers and other returned property to the press conference.

O'Reilly was among a group of activists including Deirdre Clancy, Nuin Dunlop, Karen Fallon and Damien Moran who were charged with \$2.5 million criminal damage to a US Navy war plane at Shannon in the build up to the invasion of Iraq. The group were put on trial three times at Dublin's Four Courts. They were eventually acquitted unanimously by a jury at the Four Courts in August 2006.

FEATURE

Thatcher: Putting the fun back i

When I saw the headline on the front page of the *Mail on Sunday* that Thatcher could be having a state funeral, I was quite disgusted. That this story was published with the consent of Number 10, it simply reinforced the obvious fact that New Labour really is the child of Thatcherism – and how bankrupt it is.

However, when I thought about it I started to think that in a way it would be a fitting testimony of a bankrupt ideology which has failed, and failed big time. After all, as a firm advocate of privatisation and 'market forces' the fact that her funeral is to be nationalised is a shocking insult to her political legacy and memory. Surely, it should be privatised? Shares sold to raise funds for a private event, with private individuals refusing to coerce their neighbours into marking the death so many of them are looking forward to?

What could be more symbolic than Thatcher's death being marked by means of the state, using tax-payers money? Not, I must hasten to add, that I think we should have a state funeral for the evil woman. In spite of its wonderful irony, such a nationalised event would still cost money and that is money better spent on, say, the NHS rather than giving us an opportunity (if we really needed one!) to sing 'Ding, Dong the wicked witch is dead' with gusto! It could, however be moot as there are fears that Britain's overstretched armed forces would not have the numbers to line the route which a coffin. Particularly as many attendees would be seeking to make sure she is actually dead.

Apparently the funeral would acknowledge the exceptional impact of her eleven-year premiership. If by 'exceptional' it is meant 'exceptional in its badness', then they may have a point. Somewhat fittingly, Thatcher has lived to see her experiment on the British people come off the rails.

Soaring utility bills show that privatising Gas, Electricity and Water may have been good for 'the City', but it did not guarantee low bills for consumers. The 'dash for gas' part of the Tories politically motivated assault on the miners has back-fired. Then there was the abolishing of credit control, which allowed the economy to boom somewhat (just in time for an election) before that consumer spending bubble burst, resulting in her second deep recession. Now, again, people are worried about debts and negative equity. Still, 'the City' did well, and that is what really counts.

Workers are grumbling about inflation outstripping pay raises, with more and more saying that their income has remained static for too long. Cries of 'rip-off Britain' have become commonplace, with the competitive market being recognised as little more than competition in whom among the few will exploit the many the most. With the unions weakened, this is not surprising. Without the ability to take collective action, workers are seeing more of the wealth they produce appropriated by their economic masters. And who 'tamed' the unions, so producing their situation? Thatcher.

Even the likes of *The Sun* are moaning about 'fat cat' pay, forgetting that it was Thatcher that widened the gap between rich and poor while, of course, opposing (like Thatcher) the only means of combating inequality, namely strikes and unions. And as inequality soared, social mobility has fallen – as would be expected, given that it is far easier to climb a hill than a mountain. Rest assured, when the statistics office started to show how bad things were getting Thatcher acted quickly – and stopped them collecting and publishing them (for example, the figures on individual wealth and earnings). Still, easy credit (i.e., debt) and housing bubbles allowed the so-called middle-classes to maintain the illusion of wealth while being squeezed along with the rest of us to make the rich wealthier.

And as an added bonus, debt also trapped those that unable to live within their means into the system by making their livelihood increasingly dependent on not rocking the boat. Taking strike action is



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6PM

SATURDAY AFTER MARGARET THATCHER DIES.

CLASS WAR

PO Box 467, London E8 3QX www.classwar.org

into funeral



much less appealing when faced with paying the mortgage or credit card bills.

While the tax-share under New Labour is high, it has not quite reached the record level achieved under Thatcher. Talking of taxation, she loved making it regressive. Under her, VAT increased from 8% to 17.5% and was also levied on utility bills for the first time. Her cuts in income tax for the rich were paid for by rising indirect taxation on the rest of us. The proportion of

GDP spent by the government under Thatcher stayed at around 40%, yet she funnelled it away from welfare, housing and education and spending it on warfare, a massive expansion of the central state powers and bureaucracy, paying for the costs of high unemployment, and rising police salaries to keep them loyal.

Pensioners are up in arms, urging that the link with salaries be reintroduced. Thatcher broke it. Tax-payers are grumbling about

taxes, yet who was it who doubled VAT and put it on essentials? The sublime irony of the Tories opposing New Labour's extension of student fees should not be lost on anyone who remembers who introduced them in the first place.

New Labour has raised the notion that people in negative-equity could have their houses bought by the council, with them becoming a tenant, simply because there is not enough social housing available. Thus Thatcher's 'right to buy' council houses has come unstuck, along with the housing-bubble which gave the illusion of prosperity first in the late 1980s and then a decade later. Will that be allowed? Only with central state approval, given the awkward fact that local councils have had their powers reduced by Thatcher's hatred of local democracy and her aim to centralise everything in Whitehall and unelected Quangoes to stop people stopping the free market by voting the wrong way between general elections.

Then there is the awkward fact that much that is wrong with today's Britain in social terms can be traced back to the values she promoted so strongly during her time as prime minister. The breakdown in families and communities is the logical result of market forces becoming paramount, along with the notion that there is "no such thing as society". And who said that again? Oh, that would have been Thatcher. And now, 29 years too late, the Tories have discovered that jobs are the key to a stable family life! Then there is the recent media campaign on 'broken Britain' and rising crime. Unsurprisingly, Cameron has not mentioned that crime rates doubled under Thatcher – which is understandable, as the Tories like to consider themselves strong on law and order. Yet, as with the economy, this 'strength' does not survive a meeting with reality.

For those who were paying attention, the 1980s were marked by high unemployment, high interest rates, high inflation, mass bankruptcies and home repossessions. This was achieved, in part, by the ideological embrace of Monetarism, the disastrous policy of trying to control the money supply. This helped produce the deepest recession since the 1930s, with one fifth of the UK's industrial base being wiped out and unemployment rose to its highest level since the Second World War, with prolonged mass unemployment for over a decade (and best not mention the pushing of the long term unemployed onto disability benefits and other tricks to artificially lower the figures).

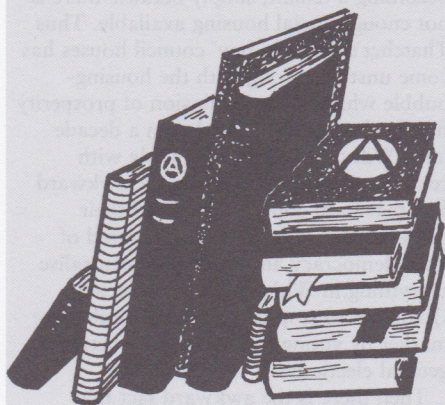
Thatcher was great for the minority at the expense of the majority. If she is to be buried anywhere, it should be under an open-air disco so we can dance on her grave. And the cost would be minimal as there are plenty of people willing to do it for nothing.

COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

On Sunday 3rd August we're emptying the downstairs stockroom ready for redecoration over August and September so we can move the bookshop downstairs in early October and be ready for our grand re-opening by mid October. Anyone who would like to help moving boxes on the 3rd or lend a hand with the redecorating, get in touch with either Andy or Mo at the bookshop either by phone at 020 7247 9249 or email shop@freedompress.org.uk



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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 16th August 2008 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 7th August. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to The Editors, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

In 2001, two hundred thousand protestors converged on Genoa to protest against the G8. They were met by ferocious violence from the Italian police and paramilitary carabinieri, which peaked with Carlo Giuliani being shot dead (see picture below).

The Diaz Pertini school was being used as a base by some of the protestors. Ninety-three were getting ready to sleep there on 21st July when, just before midnight, more than a hundred masked and helmeted riot police stormed the building, showing no mercy to the unarmed protestors. More than 60 of them were injured, three seriously, one fighting for his life. All 93 were then arrested and taken either to the Bolzaneto detention centre or the hospital. At the hospital, police ordered the injured not to move, keeping many in handcuffs. At Bolzaneto, the arrested had to run the gauntlet of police beating them as they went in. They were humiliated, ordered to sing fascist songs and shout the praises of Mussolini and Pinochet. The police threatened them with rape, continued to beat, kick and pepper spray them. They were given no blankets and the police urinated on some of them.

The medical staff were little better – one gave a British prisoner stitches in his head without anaesthetic. The police gave out a false story about those arrested being organisers of the riots that had taken place, and produced planted evidence. Some of the arrested were even treated to a bedside visit from the *Daily Mail*, presumably continuing its support of Mussolini and his heirs.

The courts refused to charge the arrested because the charges were so laughable. The

state then tried to get deportation orders, but this was overturned. An Italian prosecutor, Enrico Zucca, working with one of the victims, Mark Covell, has painstakingly made a case against some of the brutes involved. On 14th July this year, fifteen police and doctors were convicted for their role in the brutality and sentenced to various jail terms. They were freed immediately, as there is a statute of limitations that means the offences will be wiped next year.

There are more trials pending of the senior police involved, though proving that there was a 'chain of command' and that anyone had responsibility for the attack is difficult. That the brutality was sanctioned by the state was shown by the presence of the fascist minister Gianfranco Fini in the police headquarters. The perpetrators of the violence will get away with it.

It was suggested by Nick Davies in *The Guardian* that when the State feels threatened it can suspend the rule of law. He drew parallels with the restrictions on civil liberties, use of torture and abandonment of due process since the attacks on the World Trade Centre. I think he's right, but doesn't go far enough. Italy is just an extreme example of a country where the rulers declare themselves immune from prosecution and allow their lackeys free rein. This is the true face of the state – organised violence in the service of the powerful. Fascism is just the state taken to its logical conclusion. Anyone who imagines that the ruling class won't turn to it if they feel under threat is dreaming. The state has been 'reformed' for centuries. It still reverts to type. The only possible permanent reform is its abolition.



One missed point

It is unfortunate that James Horrox's otherwise faultless piece on Kropotkin (21st June, page 13) misses one word in its summary of Kropotkin's work on evolution. Horrox writes: "Kropotkin argued that the 'fittest' are those creatures that have developed the capacity to help each other rather than to struggle against each other for dominance". If he had inserted the word 'often' between 'are' and 'those', he would have nailed it. However, by not doing so he perpetuates a misunderstanding that Iain McKay, in the same issue, does so well to dispel.

Those still unsure about Kropotkin's meaning need only look at the full title of his book: *Mutual Aid, a Factor of Evolution*. It is not the whole story, but a factor, an aspect, undervalued and ignored by Social Darwinists.

It should be no surprise to us that cooperation is a strategy that many organisms adopt, being, as we are, social animals ourselves. If we take the narrow and literalist definition of Darwin's metaphor 'survival of the fittest' favoured by Social Darwinists, how do we account for those animals who pass on those social adaptations which provide them the evolutionary advantage a more solitary organism would not possess?

I have not yet read Steve Jones' book which sparked this exchange, but if he really does portray Kropotkin in the way it is suggested, that is a shame. Dawkins, in the chapter of *Unweaving the Rainbow* he entitled 'The Selfish Co-operator', explains how altruism at the level of individual organisms can be the means by which the genes derive evolutionary advantage. Indeed Jones himself once said "I think *The Selfish Gene*, written by Richard Dawkins, is an extremely good book. But I do wonder if he wakes up sweating at night every now and then wishing that he had called the book something like 'Kin Selection and the Origins of Altruism', which is what it's about."

Cooperation is now well recognised as an adaptation conferring evolutionary advantage, and indeed that other big name of evolutionary biology, Stephen Jay Gould, has something more specific to say on *Mutual Aid* and Kropotkin when he writes:

"I would hold that Kropotkin's basic argument is correct. Struggle does occur in many modes, and some lead to cooperation among members of a species as the best pathway to advantage for individuals. If Kropotkin overemphasised mutual aid, most Darwinians in Western Europe had exaggerated competition just as strongly." (Stephen Jay Gould, 'Kropotkin was no crackpot' in *Natural History* 106, June 1997, pages 12-21.)

Co-operation is not the whole story of evolution, and neither is it the whole story of human nature. We know enough about both to have evidence of that. But it would be unfair to Kropotkin to portray him as advancing that view, just as it would

diminish our understanding of both evolution and human nature if we saw only selfish, bloody competition.

Steve McKee

We may be poor, but we're no stupid

David Cameron is out setting the scene for state indifference to the working class if the Old Tories get in. He stated that "we talk about people being at risk of poverty, or social exclusion: it's as if these things – obesity, alcohol abuse, drug addiction – are purely external events like a plague or bad weather" before asserting that "social problems are often the consequence of the choices that people make".

So if you are poor, it is your own fault. That has always been the refrain of the ruling classes. Understandably, as this perspective is ideal for focusing attention away from an unjust economic and social system which empowers and enriches the few at the expense of the many. It also ensures that the notion that the exploding inequality within society since 1979, plus any redistribution of wealth, can be ignored.

If the Old Tories are trying to rebrand themselves as being to the left of New Labour (aka the New Tories), he will need to improve his rhetoric – but he is walking a tight-rope between appealing to the general public and keeping the living fossils of the Conservative Party happy. It is doubtful anyone will be convinced. To quote one Glaswegian's response to the question of whether he would vote Tory after Ian Duncan Smith's conversion to concern for the poor after seeing the effects of the Thatcherite policies he supported: "We may be poor, but we're no stupid".

Presumably this should mean that Cameron, how that the Old Tories are portraying themselves as the party of the poor, will now embrace trade unionism. This

is, after all, the classic example of working class people taking responsibility for their bad situation and making choices to improve it. Self-help, what could be better? It seems unlikely, given that Cameron, a few weeks earlier, warned the government it was going to have to be "extremely tough" on unions to avert a wave of strikes. He did so for altruistic reasons, of course. He backed tough action on strikes as they "rarely achieve their goal", he said.

Apparently workers needed to be protected from themselves, in their own interests. So we can expect the Old Tory's to continue their 'rolling back' of the state by organising massive state intervention in the labour market. Perhaps this action of the nanny state will be framed as "helping people being at risk of taking collective action"? Similarly, it is doubtful that Tory concern for individual responsibility and people living with the consequences of the choices they make will be extended to the elite by refusing to support state bailouts of banks and other capitalist companies. For them, the recession and the credit crunch will be considered purely external events rather than the direct consequence of an unjust economic system and the decisions those in charge of it make to enhance their wealth and power.

To doubly show his lack of any grasp with reality, Cameron opined that Labour was "so reliant" on unions for funding they felt they had a "stranglehold" over the party and could "dictate terms"! Has he not been paying attention since 1997? The one thing New Labour has been consistent about has been precisely ignoring the unions.

The big question is why the unions have not asked for their money back – and reconsider the utility of supporting a political party who has pursued the same neo-liberal policies of the Old Tories. Still, perhaps they can just repeat the mantra that things will be worse under the neo-neo-Thatcherites than the current neo-Thatcherites...

Anon

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GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

Silence is contempt for McGowan

On Monday 14th July Daniel McGowan appeared in federal court in the Western District of Wisconsin (Madison) before Judge Barbara Crabb and was found in civil contempt for his refusal to answer questions before a grand jury.

McGowan was jailed for the arson of Superior Lumber company in Glendale, Oregon, on 2nd January 2001 and Jefferson Poplar Farms in Clatskanie, Oregon, on 21st May 2001, claimed by the Earth Liberation Front (ELF). McGowan was facing a minimum of life in prison if convicted when he accepted a non-cooperation plea agreement. His arrest is part of what the US government has dubbed Operation Backfire.

Since he is already in custody for his existing prison sentence, this means that his clock of time being served has stopped. An appeal has been filed by his lawyer to the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals, as well as a motion for bail (in his case since he wouldn't be released, to start his federal time moving forward again).

Right now, until the grand jury is dismissed or other agreements are made within that case and things are resolved, his time will not count as time served. It is unknown whether he will remain in county jail for the full extension of this period.

Supporters are urged to continue to write to Daniel with positive thoughts, funny stories, and well wishes, as this has been a particularly stressful and difficult time.

• Daniel McGowan, Columbia County Jail, 403 Jackson Street, Portage, Wisconsin 53901, USA

Cop-watch activist charged

Joaquin Cienfuegos, who is active in Cop-Watch LA, Anarchist People of Color (APOC) and Revolutionary Autonomous Communities, has been arrested on a felony charge of possession of a concealed weapon.

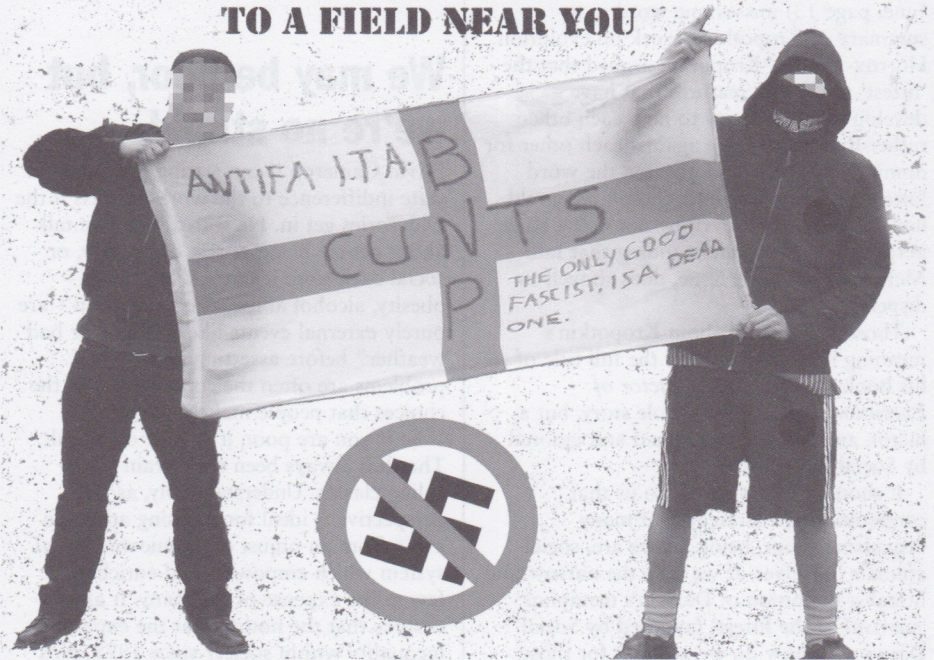
Supporters say the arrest, which involves a legally-purchased firearm kept in the boot of his car while he was driving it, appears to be concocted by members of the Los Angeles Police Department who have come under the uncomfortable community scrutiny of Cop-Watch Los Angeles.

The felony possession charge is a serious one as it carries a prison sentence and bail has been set at an exorbitant \$40,000. The community is attempting to raise bail.

A supporter wrote: "Joaquin is obviously known and intensely disliked by the LAPD and every minute he is in their custody, his life is at risk. We demand that the bogus charge against him be dropped immediately and that he be returned unharmed to his community. We call for an international campaign by progressive and community organisations for his release."

For updates and to get in touch with APOC, who are organising a campaign of support for Joaquin, go to illvox.org or his blog at joaquincienfuegos.blogspot.com

ANTIFA COMING SOON TO A FIELD NEAR YOU



Flagging a warning to Warner

● **Hello Alan:** The BNP member who will stage the party's annual festival on his land later this year has told how his property has been targeted by vandals. Alan Warner, of Codnor Denby Lane in Denby village, a former BNP councillor on Heanor Town Council, said he awoke to find a torrent of abuse daubed on his garden wall in white paint. He said: "I got up and there were three bike locks attached to my gate" (*Ripley And Heanor News*)

● **Bye-bye Luke:** Luke Smith, former BNP councillor, and one of the most vicious little bastards Burnley has seen, has killed himself. Smith was expelled from the BNP after smashing a bottle into the face of BNP Insecurity chief Martin Reynolds, and has rarely been out of bother since. He was jailed for 17 months in March 2006 for violent disorder, and at the time of his suicide was awaiting sentencing for assaulting the landlord of a Burnley pub. Smith chose to take his life next to the Balti King takeaway in Yorkshire Street, Burnley, somewhere which is certain to become a favourite spot for local anti-fascists to hang out.

antifa.org.uk

● **Prosecution for Nazi sites?** The prosecutions against Simon Shepperd (of 98 Brook Street, Selby) and Luke Whittle (of Avenham Lane, Preston), for spreading race hate via Shepperd's 'Heretical Press' site, has dragged on for sometime now, with the trial itself lasting seven weeks. While the jury were unable to reach verdicts on several counts against Shepperd, he and Whittle were found guilty of all the other charges. The convictions look set to bring to an end the period when British neo-Nazis thought they were safe from prosecution because the

servers hosting their websites were located abroad. At this news their only supporter in the stands – BPP leader Kevin Watmough – burst into tears, throwing doubt on his claim not to run the Redwatch website that advocates attacking left wingers and provides details on them also. Surprisingly, after guilty verdicts were returned on most of the counts, the pair were allowed to remain on bail. They did not return to court on Monday, choosing instead to try and illegally enter the United States. Currently being detained in an immigration detention facility in Los Angeles, we wonder if their attitude to asylum seekers is beginning to change at all.

● **Lucky seven for eviction Boston resisters:** On 15th July Paula Taylor of the Roxbury neighbourhood of Boston, and the City Life/ Vida Urbana (CLVU) Bank Tenants Union, along with supporters successfully resisted an eviction attempt by Countrywide Financial. Taylor and the Tenants Union and are asking Countrywide to accept rent money instead of making her homeless; she had become a victim of the foreclosure scandals sweeping the US, and is now offering money to rent what she once owned. Countrywide called the eviction off after hearing from the police and the constable that there were 30 people in front of Paula's house ready to resist the eviction with the support of volunteer lawyers, and five people chained to the two entrances. Various groups came out to support of Paula and her CLVU Bank Tenant's Union including local anarchists in NEFAC. This is the seventh successful eviction blockade of seven by the working class housing movement in Boston and the next planned blockade may come as soon as next week in the city's Roslindale neighbourhood.

Post-anarchism

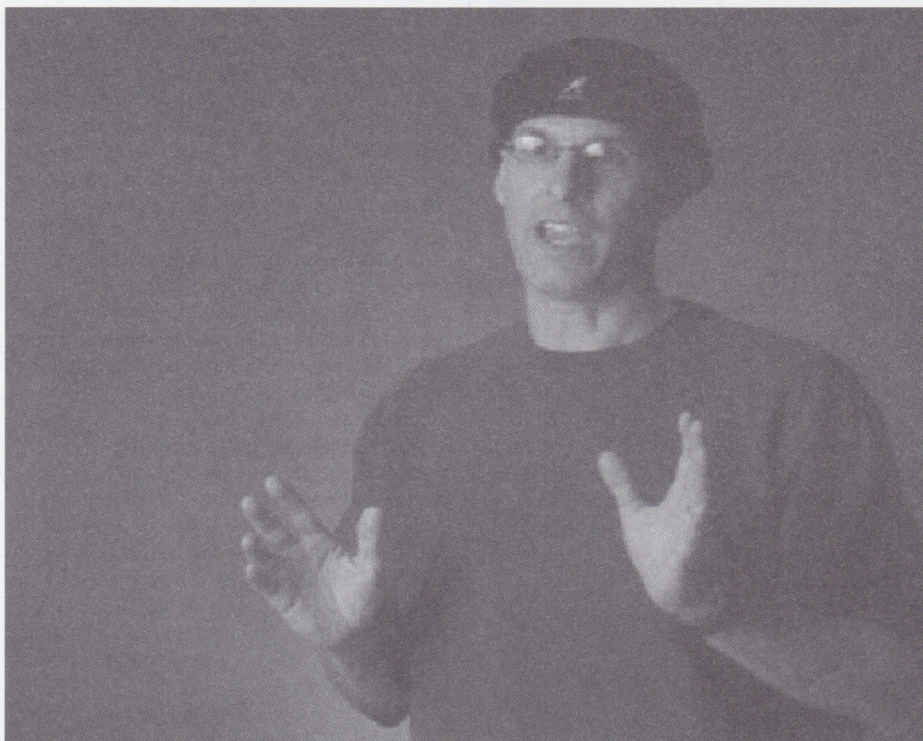
Post-anarchism (or postanarchism) is the term used to represent anarchist philosophies developed since the 1980s using post-structuralist and postmodernist approaches. Some prefer to use the term 'post-structuralist anarchism', so as not to suggest having moved 'past' anarchism.

Post-anarchism is not one single coherent theory, but rather is different for each thinker, who use the differently combined works of any number of post-structuralists (such as Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze), postmodern feminists (Judith Butler), and post-Marxists (Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, Jean Baudrillard), with those of classical anarchists, with particular concentration on Emma Goldman and Max Stirner. Thus the philosophy of each proponent of post-anarchism varies widely in both approach and outcome.

The prefix 'post-' does not mean 'after anarchism', but refers instead to the challenging and disruption of typically accepted assumptions within frameworks that emerged during the Enlightenment era. This means a basic rejection of the epistemological foundations of classical anarchist theories, due to their tendency towards essentialist or reductionist notions (although post-anarchists are generally quick to point out the many outstanding exceptions, such as those noted above). Such an approach is considered important insofar as it widens the conception of what it means to have, or to be produced, rather than only repressed, by power. It thus encourages those who act against power in the form of domination to become aware of how their resistance often becomes overdetermined by power-effects as well. It argues against earlier approaches that capitalism and the state are not the only sources of domination in the moment in which we live, and that new approaches need to be developed to combat the network-centric structures of domination that characterise late modernity.

Although thinkers such as Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, Butler, Lacan, and Lyotard are not explicitly self-described anarchists, their ideas are nevertheless seen as being of great importance to contemporary anarchist theorising, given that their thought is certainly some of the most thoroughly anti-authoritarian to emerge in the history of philosophy, and since most of these actively engaged in the events of May 1968 when a series of student protests and a general strike caused the eventual collapse of the De Gaulle government in France.

Some concepts common within post-anarchism include the misalignment of the subject in relation to discourse, the denaturalisation of the body and sexuality, the rejection of the repressive hypothesis, Foucault's genealogy, the deconstruction of the binary opposition of Western thought,



Political philosopher Todd May

the deconstruction of gender roles through feminist poststructuralism.

'Poststructuralist anarchism' was initiated by political philosopher Todd May in 1994. May argued for a theory grounded in the poststructuralist understanding of power, particularly through the work of Michel Foucault and Emma Goldman as a corrective to more circumscribed notions, while taking the anarchist approach to ethics as a mode through which to recast the poststructuralist lack of elucidation in this domain.

The 'Lacanian anarchism' proposed by UK-based academic and political theorist Saul Newman utilises the works of Jacques Lacan and Max Stirner more prominently. Newman, who has been credited with coining the term 'post-anarchism' and later popularised it through his 2001 book *From Bakunin to Lacan*, criticises classical anarchists such as Michael Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin for assuming an objective 'human nature' and a natural order. He argues that from this approach, humans progress and are well-off by nature, with only the Establishment as a limitation that forces behaviour otherwise. For Newman, this is a Manichaean worldview, which depicts only the reversal of Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan, in which the 'good' state is subjugated by the 'evil' people.

American academic Lewis Call, best known for his 2002 book *Postmodern Anarchism* has attempted to develop post-anarchist theory through the work of

cyberpunk writers such as William Gibson and Bruce Sterling, and that of Friedrich Nietzsche, rejecting the Cartesian concept of the 'subject'. From here a radical form of anarchism is made possible; the anarchism of 'becoming'. This anarchism does not have an eventual goal, nor flow into 'being'; it is not a final state of development, nor a static form of society, but rather becomes permanent, as a means without end. Italian autonomist Giorgio Agamben has also written about this idea. In this respect it is similar to the 'complex systems' view of emerging society known as Panarchy. Call critiques liberal notions of language, consciousness and rationality from an anarchist perspective, arguing that they are inherent in economic and political power within the capitalist state organisation.

The Post-Anarchism Reader: Writings at the Intersection of Anarchism and Post-structuralism is, in the words of co-editor Duane Rousselle, an "attempt to take what are now scattered, yet important, articles and combine them into an accessible anthology, it will be just one shameless attempt at sustainable community". The anthology will include reprints of the pivotal texts from Todd May and Saul Newman, among others, and an interview with Lewis Call. The editors, Rousselle and Jason Adams, have been in contact with anarchist publisher Autonomedia and hope to publish *The Post-Anarchism Reader* in late 2008 or early 2009.

(adapted from Wikipedia)

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON
AUGUST

4th to 11th Climate Camp at e.on's proposed new Kingsnorth coal fired power station near Rochester, Kent, with day of action against agrofuels on Wednesday 6th and a day of mass action on Saturday 9th August, see climatecamp.org.uk

6th Torriano Poets for Peace at Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX – an evening of peace poetry hosted by John Rety from 7–9pm

7th to 10th Northern Green Gathering, somewhere in North Yorkshire, for more see nggonline.org.uk

11th When Jeff 'Free' Luers was sentenced to 22 years 8 months, it was clear that the judge was basing his decision on Jeff's politics and not the crime, watch 22/8: *The Jeffrey Luers Story* at 7.30pm, Pogo Café, 76 Clarence Road, Hackney, London E5 8HB, see pogocafe.co.uk or call 020 8533 1214

16th Anti-fascist mobilisation, Shut Down the BNP's 'Red White & Blue' Festival in Derbyshire, see antifa.org.uk for more.

18th Projections at Pogo showing *Afro-Punk*, a documentary exploring race identity in the punk scene, at 7.30pm, Pogo Café, 76 Clarence Road, Hackney, London E5 8HB, see pogocafe.co.uk or call 020 8533 1214 for details.

20th to 27th People's Global Action Gathering, a range of events in Athens, Greece, for more see www.agp.org or http://europe.pgaconference.org/en/greece_08

21st to 24th International Animal Rights Gathering, a time to get together and talk, to socialise and build up networks, to be held south of Vienna, Austria, at the foot of the massive Schneeberg mountain, see ar2008.info

27th to 1st September Earth First! Summer Gathering, 'Ecological Direct Action without Compromise' in Norfolk, see www.earthfirstgathering.org.uk

SEPTEMBER

6th Belfast Anarchist Bookfair at Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre (beside the John Hewitt) on Lower Donegal Street from 12 noon until 6pm, see <http://belfastanarchistbookfair2008.blogspot.com>

7th London Vegan Festival from 10am to 8pm at Kensington Town Hall, Hornton Street, London W8, see vegancampaigns.org festival for more.

13th Bristol Anarchist Bookfair from 10am to 5pm at St Werburghs Centre, Horley Road, Bristol BS2 9TJ, see bristolanarchistbookfair.org

OCTOBER

15th Smash EDO mass demo against the arms trade, meet opposite Falmer station (next to the Sussex University sign), Brighton

18th London Anarchist Bookfair from 10am to 7pm at Queen Mary & Westfield College, Mile End Road, London E1 4ND

PAMPHLETS

Salvador Puig Antich and the MIL
edited by Paul Sharkey and Anna Key,
KSL (Kate Sharpley Library), £3.00

Once again KSL are to be congratulated for bringing out pamphlets that actually increase our knowledge of anarchist activists in other countries. Whilst I'm old enough to remember Salvador Puig Antich, his political background I wasn't aware of – the MIL (Movimento Iberico de Liberacion) was a mixture of anarchism with late '60s and early '70s autonomist worker / left communist / pro-situationist / underground vibes.

The MIL was dedicated to theoretically informed action, and was responsible, among other things for both bank hold-ups to gain funds for striking workers and the publication of propaganda, and more general political work. Among the texts included in the pamphlet are an analysis from an left communist perspective, the text from one of their leaflets, the dissolution statement of the MIL, and several looks at his historical legacy and how that legacy has been co-opted by the media to make him into an anti-Francoist / pro-democracy martyr, rather than a working class militant who paid the ultimate price in waging class war.

There are mentions of the MIL magazine whose title, *CIA*, translates in full as 'The International Anarchist Conspiracy' – I wonder if there are plans to translate these into English?

Rebellious Spirit: Maria Occhipinti and the Ragusa Anti-Draft Revolt of 1945

edited by Paul Sharkey and Anna Key,
KSL (Kate Sharpley Library), £3.00

I was blissfully totally unaware of Maria Occhipinti. She was engaged in anti-war activism that culminated in a series of urban and rural revolts in Sicily in 1945, when the population refused to co-operate with the enforced drafting off recently returned soldiers, for whom, as the saying goes, the war had most definitely ended, no matter the new government insisted.

After the suppression of the revolts Maria served her two-year prison term and then embarked on her personal quest for freedom that would take her all over the world, whilst keeping contact with revolutionary and feminist movements. Initially Maria had been a rank and file Communist Party member but joined the anarchists in Sicily once she left prison. The pamphlet also deals with the history of anarchist activism in Sicily and the work of Franco Leggio, who dedicated his life to the anarchist movement in Sicily and Italy.

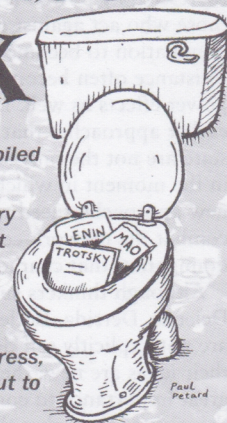
Maybe one day someone will translate and publish her autobiographical works in English – they would make very inspirational reading. In the meantime we have this pamphlet to give us flavour of her life.

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QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote *Pensees Sauvages*, normally translated as *The Savage Mind*, but it can also be translated as 'wild pansies' and the French edition has a pansy on the cover.
2. In Australia, before the Pope visited this year, temporary regulations were brought in against anyone handing out 'annoying' leaflets or condoms to pilgrims. They were overturned by a judge who ruled that there was "no

intelligible boundary" on what constituted annoyance.

3. Tobacco. Cannabis is fine on its own or mixed with anything else, but smoking it with tobacco contravenes anti-smoking laws.
4. The Anarcho Syndicalist Initiative of Serbia (see picture).



Happy-Go-Lucky

Belying his miserabilist reputation, Mike Leigh's new film celebrates incorrigible optimism – but with the usual twists, finds Tom Jennings

After virtually unremitting gloom in Mike Leigh's family dramas *All Or Nothing* (2002) and *Vera Drake* (2005)¹, it's telling that *Happy-Go-Lucky's* refreshingly light tone most strongly parallels Johnny's cynical nihilism in *Naked* (1993) railing at Thatcherism's social wasteland. Here, Sally Hawkins' pitch-perfect portrayal of thirty-year-old primary-schoolteacher Poppy anchors a loose, patchwork narrative also set in North London bedsitland, whereas this single-character study (with superb supporting performances) wards off hopelessness with an insistent positive outlook on adversity – the catchphrase "It makes me laugh!" echoing many of the writer-director's previous protagonists. Risking sinking under the weight of her own clichés, Poppy nevertheless conveys sufficient complexity and subtle depth to convince – whose intelligible strategy to cope with an apparently fast-deteriorating world moreover retains a motivation to cultivate in everyone around her a sense that life is worth living. The film's tensions and dynamism then emerge from various manifestations of negativity testing the considerable effort required to sustain this philosophy.

However, this is no superficial, conservative, feelgood 'chick-flick' – despite bright and breezy, colourful lighting, design and widescreen cinematography mirroring Poppy's garish grunge, wide-eyed sunny non-conformism and all-round Prozac attitude. Straightaway, her joking, self-deprecating banter falters when a sullen shop-assistant won't cooperate – pretending things aren't so bad sometimes being simply insulting. Likewise, an ostensibly carefree lifestyle of aimless diversions – particularly with fellow-teacher, flatmate and best friend since college, Zoe (wryly commenting that being grown-up is hard) – palls as pressures to transcend extended adolescence are palpable for all concerned. Inspirational teaching can't single-handedly ameliorate the damaging domestic environments of the kids, older colleagues are patently unfulfilled by work, and the spin on regular Leigh themes of inter-generational relations and the demands of adulthood is reinforced by the unhappy hostility of Poppy's two sisters (self-pitying student; straitlaced suburban housewife) counterpointing her zany complacency.



Happy-Go-Lucky's women persevere with each other loyally, differences notwithstanding, but three dysfunctional male incarnations interrupt Poppy's gaiety more decisively. Patience and concerned curiosity uncover the abusive source of a little boy's bullying, which may still be preempted, while genuine feeling in a night-time encounter with an angrily incoherent homeless man hints at deeper empathy with the anguish of life falling apart. And rejecting the judgmentalism of others is no narcissistic defence because, in the sequence of driving lessons forming the film's core, even her bitter, paranoid, utterly reactionary instructor isn't written off. Scott's conception of education as rigid hidebound rule-systems obviously contradicts her intuitive expressivity but, while rejecting his authoritarian excess, she persists in trying to understand where he's coming from – which he mistakes for mocking and flirtation, responding even more obsessively and inappropriately. Then, in yet another structural balancing act, her new, rather drippy, social-worker boyfriend allows gentle caring, good humour and the possibility of passionate commitment to coexist – before the camera finally draws back as Poppy and Zoe muse on what the future holds...

Prozac Attitude

It's hard to convey the full richness of a Mike Leigh film in a few short paragraphs. Refusing Hollywood's cardboard cut-out conventions and heroic individual transcendences, he plays with and undermines the generic expectations of

melodrama, satire, tragedy and farce in favour of minor crises or tipping points accompanying the slow accretion of painful and pleasurable experience bounded by the intransigence of a heartless world. His preference for characters from lower-class backgrounds originated in a middle-class childhood in a downmarket district of Salford where a keen sociability was fed by encounters with less privileged folk trumping the stultifying conformity of his own household and others like it,² leading to a lifelong distrust of pretension and pompousness. From this, the strength of his ensemble pieces often lies in the generosity and goodwill found within social networks, but such phenomena are never glibly asserted and frequently overshadowed by the depression and petty malice arising from frustrated needs. Thus points of identification, alienation, sadness, hilarity and antipathy oscillate as viewers recognise themselves and others in characters simultaneously lamented and applauded, but whose integrity is always respected. The work then "aspires to the conditions of documentary" in accurate depictions of real life at specific times in identifiable places, while simultaneously representing ambitious artistic contrivance in building believable human mosaics from scratch.³

Exhaustive individual backstories are built in close collaboration with the cast, gradually extending into collective improvisations and rehearsals from which the script is developed. The vast bulk of detail developed in this process subsequently echoes in the final product only in informing



Review

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behaviour and interaction, where the actors don't know what will happen before the characters would. Arriving at similar preoccupations to those of cinematic naturalism or social realism, the use of these entirely different means and methods gives the films their direct intensity of impact and honest, sympathetic ambivalence concerning the tragicomedies of ordinary life where relatively unexceptional situations conspire to close down or open up anyone's potential. *Happy-Go-Lucky's* central concern, indeed, is finding a suitable orientation to contemporary tragicomedies and potentials in a context where such widespread political pessimism inclines many to give up altogether. Embodying a vulnerable struggle for maturity while determined not to lose the childlike enchant-

ment with the world that can imagine and provoke renewal, Poppy perhaps tentatively reflects – in typically sly, understated fashion – Leigh's own 'socialistic' and 'anarchistic' impulses and hopes,⁴ since he takes such great pains to acknowledge the uncomfortable texture of mundane daily life precisely in order to "reveal the transformative potential that is continually being generated within it".⁵

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

Notes

1. See my review of the latter in *Freedom*, 5th February 2005.
2. See Amy Raphael (editor), *Mike Leigh On Mike Leigh*, Faber, 2008.
3. Discussed in detail in Raymond Carney and Leonard Quart, *The Films of Mike Leigh: Embracing the World*, Cambridge University Press, 2000.
4. See, for example, Michael Coveney, *The World According to Mike Leigh*, Harper

Collins, 1996; and Howie Movshovitz (editor), *Mike Leigh: Interviews*, University Press of Mississippi, 2000.

5. Garry Watson, *The Cinema of Mike Leigh: A Sense of the Real*, Wallflower, 2004, page 23.

Happy-Go-Lucky is released on DVD on 18th August.

THE QUIZ

1. Who wrote a book called *Wild Pansies*?
2. Where was being annoying, briefly, a crime?
3. What will customers of Amsterdam's famous coffee shops not be able to smoke soon?
4. Which anarcho-syndicalist group uses a black owl as its logo?

Answers on page 14

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much less appealing when faced with paying the mortgage or credit card bills.

While the tax-share under New Labour is high, it has not quite reached the record level achieved under Thatcher. Talking of taxation, she loved making it regressive. Under her, VAT increased from 8% to 17.5% and was also levied on utility bills for the first time. Her cuts in income tax for the rich were paid for by rising indirect taxation on the rest of us. The proportion of

GDP spent by the government under Thatcher stayed at around 40%, yet she funnelled it away from welfare, housing and education and spending it on warfare, a massive expansion of the central state powers and bureaucracy, paying for the costs of high unemployment, and rising police salaries to keep them loyal.

Pensioners are up in arms, urging that the link with salaries be reintroduced. Thatcher broke it. Tax-payers are grumbling about